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Going Bush by Design



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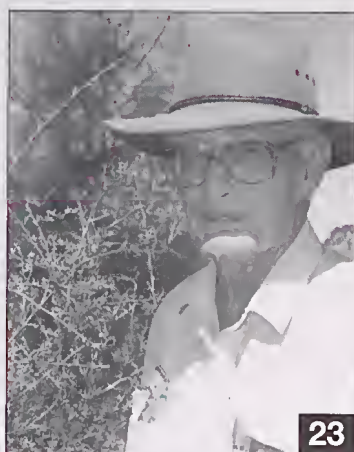
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Gatehouse Street Park in Royal Park, Melbourne, designed by Grace Fraser in 1973 to showcase Australian plants for tourists. Photo: Paul Thompson.

Grevillea 'Sandra Gordon', a natural hybrid discovered at Myall Park. Photo: Carol McCormack

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Foreword

Going Bush By Design

This issue of *Australian Garden History* extends the theme of the lecture series 'Out of the Bush and into the Garden', arranged by Suzanne Hunt for the Victorian Branch last year, from a regional to a national perspective by way of contributions from or about all mainland states.

Tasmania is not mentioned although Tasmanians were just as cognisant of indigenous plants as other states, but in a different way, perhaps because the climate produced lush vegetation. They moved steadily along a path investigating the idea of 'wilderness' rather than 'bush'. It led to a concern for conservation of natural habitats and to the 'green' movement, taken to luxuriant, tropical areas of coastal Queensland and to the rainforests of Victoria and Western Australia.

Reading the contributions to this journal, one cannot but be impressed by the meetings, the plant exchanges, the correspondence, the generosity, the networking and the camaraderie of those who were developing a new approach to urban and domestic landscape and garden design. The same names crisscross the continent and are mentioned by many of the writers. State boundaries counted for little, yet in the end it is arguable that a distinctive Australian garden design style emerged. That is still to come.

Nina Crone

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Australia's Arboreta

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Platypus House, Taronga Zoo, immediately after planting, 1970.



View of Platypus House, Taronga Zoo in 1978.



Designing Sydney's Bushland Parks in the 1960s and 1970s

Text and Photographs by **Allan Correy**

The period after the Second World War heralded significant changes in the ways Australians responded to their diverse natural environments and sought to change their own gardens and local parks.

All great landscape designs are a reflection of a particular time, place and culture, but for them to have actually come into being, a number of critical factors had to play an important role. Political and social climates had to be receptive to the designers' ideas, and the available materials and technology had to be appropriate to their construction. All those factors culminated in Sydney during the golden decades of the sixties and seventies, resulting in the creation of some of the city's most innovative green spaces.

Prelude

After the Second World War most Australians were content with new garden layouts that incorporated the latest types of paving materials, free-form curves including kidney-shaped pools, and plants of striking architectural form, features that became popular in municipal parks and gardens throughout the 1950s. However, some were turning their attention to more natural-looking designs, using native plants, and organic materials, such as bush rock, moss-covered logs and river pebbles.

Two books of great assistance to people wanting to establish native gardens at that time were Ernest Lord's *Shrubs and Trees for Australian Gardens* (1948), and Thistle Harris's *Australian Plants for the Garden* (1953). The latter contained planting plans for a range of typical suburban gardens, each with different soil and climatic conditions. The base plans were drawn by Melbourne landscape designer Edna Walling and Sydney architect Norman Weekes, and the accompanying

plant lists were compiled by the author. This was one of the earliest publications to illustrate how to design a garden using only Australian species. However, Harris was not overly concerned about natural ecological associations and included species from many parts of the continent, basing her selection on aesthetic qualities and suitability for the edaphic and climate factors pertaining to each garden example.

This book, together with the formation of local branches of the Society for Growing Australian Plants (now the Australian Plants Society) and the availability of native plants suitable for domestic gardens from the NSW Forestry Commission nurseries, encouraged many garden enthusiasts to replace exotic species with indigenous ones. While this resulted in some very pleasing arrangements of natives, the limited choice of species available commercially led to the overuse of certain species. Coast rosemary (*Westringia fruticosa*), bracelet honey myrtle (*Melaleuca armillaris*), rosemary spider flower (*Grevillea rosmarinifolia*), willow gum (*Eucalyptus scoparia*), broad-leaf paperbark (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*) appeared *ad nauseam* in domestic gardens, suburban streets, highway shoulders and medians, and municipal parks all over Sydney.

Bush gardens

While interest in Australian plants gathered momentum throughout the fifties, most home gardeners and public authorities tended to choose species not only from the Sydney region, but also from other parts of Australia. They showed a preference for the more showy new cultivars rather than natural species, and for indiscriminately mixed native and exotic species.

Two publications, which helped to change peoples' attitude to designing with Australian plants and to focus attention more on the flora of the Sydney region, were *Designing Australian Bush Gardens* (1966) and *More About Bush Gardens* (1967) by Betty Maloney and Jean Walker. Delightfully illustrated by the



Creating artificial dunes and wetlands, Sir Joseph Banks Park, Botany Bay, c. 1980.



Alternative parkland, Sir Joseph Banks Park, Botany Bay, 1987.

authors, both gifted botanical artists, who had each created a bush garden around their own suburban houses in Sydney, these modest little books appealed to readers, who found the ideas practical and easy to emulate. Many of the simple drawings have a unique visual texture, which brings the plans to life and allows the reader to use them literally as working drawings.

At the time, these publications helped to stimulate a wider interest both in the preservation of native flora and in the use and value of indigenous plants in suburban gardens. They are now seen as seminal works among the body of literature on bush gardens. In fact, the eminent American landscape architect Garrett Eckbo, in the revised edition of his book *Home Landscape* (1978), quoted direct from both Maloney and Walker publications, going on to say:

'the Australian movement called bush gardening has probably captured the spirit of the [ecological/environmental] movement more completely than any work being done in North America or Europe'.

From Eckbo, high praise indeed.

Taronga Zoo

Parallel with a growing community interest in native plants was the development of the environment movement and resident action groups, both of which lobbied governments at all levels, not only to preserve remnant bushland, but also to re-establish native vegetation by appropriate design and planting wherever possible.

One of the first examples of the creation of a bushland setting on public land was associated with the initial stage of the redevelopment of Taronga Zoo on the northern shore of Sydney Harbour. In 1967, at the request of the Under Secretary of Lands, a Planning Committee was constituted, consisting of members of the Taronga Zoo Trust and representatives of the Government Architect's Branch of the NSW Department of Public Works, to undertake systematic replanning and redevelopment of the zoo. The newly formed Landscape Section within the Government Architect's Branch played a vital role in this project by participating in the overall planning, and by detailing the hard and soft landscape works associated with the new Australian section. Apart from using only Australian plant species throughout the Australian section, the overall policy was predominantly to use species native to the Hawkesbury sandstone geology throughout the zoo.

Visually, this was to link the zoo to the existing bushland on either side of the site, in Ashton Park and around Little Sirius Cove, and also to provide a wildlife corridor, particularly for birds.

Because of its high profile as a tourist attraction, much of the design detailing was of a sophisticated nature, with pedestrian paths following generous curves and wide enough to accommodate large crowds, constructed with specially hard-burnt bricks laid on a consolidated road base and contained by brick kerbs and gutters. To provide a bold visual effect and to withstand heavy visitor impact, planting tended to be in broad swathes of a limited number of robust species in all the public areas. However, within the animal enclosures and in areas away from direct public contact, an effort was made to reflect ecological plant associations found naturally on Hawkesbury sandstone.

Taronga Zoo set new standards in landscape design for others to follow, and the site planning methodology, design details, and planting techniques became standard practice on all subsequent large-scale projects undertaken by the Public Works Department Landscape Section.

Balmain parks

In the late 1960s, as part of a policy to increase the amount of public open space in inner urban areas, the State Planning Authority of NSW began acquiring parcels of disused land (both private and government owned) in strategic locations. It then encouraged local authorities to develop them into public parkland. Two such areas, destined to be among Sydney's most memorable parks, were at Peacock Point and Longnose Point, Balmain.

Both parks, which occupy superb harbour-side sites, were designed by Bruce Mackenzie and Associates with the idea of restoring some of the original vegetation to provide a naturalistic bushland setting within which visitors and local residents could enjoy various forms of passive recreation. Mackenzie described his design theory as 'alternative parkland'. On one hand he envisaged it as being a very different experience from that of the conventional urban park with its ordered pathways and manicured lawns and planting. And on the other hand, he saw it as offering the mood experience of a national park - but without the inherent remoteness and real or perceived dangers.



Recycled sandstone for paving and walls blends with natural rock outcrops, and planting of coastal species echoes surrounding vegetated headlands at Yurulbin Park, Balmain, c.1980.



Exposed rock faces, sandstone walls and simulated coastal thickets, Illoura Reserve, Balmain c.1980.

As only species native to the foreshores of Sydney Harbour were planted, the two restored sites now have the general appearance of naturally vegetated harbour peninsulas. But at the same time they provide a visitor-experience of ordered parkland which is both aesthetically pleasing and a delight to explore, with no fear of becoming lost.

Unlike Taronga Zoo, which required the use of new materials and refined detailing in its public areas, the Balmain parks provided the designer with wonderful opportunities to include recycled materials used in imaginative ways. The boom years of the sixties and seventies was a time of seemingly endless demolition of old buildings, which resulted in unlimited supplies of reusable materials – weathered dimensioned sandstone, wharf piles, power poles, warehouse timber beams, granite setts, second-hand bricks – all organic elements to gratify any landscape designer. Demolition stone blended beautifully with the existing sandstone outcrops, timber poles were ideal for simple fences, retaining walls and structures, and baulks of timber were ready-made for bollards and seats.

Completed in the early 1970s, Peacock Point Park (now Illoura Reserve) and Longnose Point Park (now Yurulbin Park) became models to which other designers, involved in the reclamation of similar derelict sites, looked for inspiration. Opportunities to reuse building materials, which required less sophisticated construction techniques, appealed particularly to local councils wanting to appease resident groups' demands for more parks, and at the same time employ their own labour forces. Replicas – some good, some poor – of these Balmain parks began to appear throughout metropolitan Sydney and 'bushland parks' became the new fashion.

Lane Cove landscapes

One of the more enlightened local authorities at this time, and one that took up the idea of establishing bushland parks throughout its municipality, was Lane Cove Council. Not only were the majority of councillors dedicated to restoring urban bushland – in fact, most had been elected on a 'green' vote – but the Town Clerk, Municipal Engineer and Parks Superintendent were key officers also committed to ensuring that any decisions made by Council to establish bushland parks were implemented.

In addition, Council engaged a landscape consultant, the late Harry Howard, to assess the municipality's open space system and to recommend long-term planting and design policies that would eventually turn Lane Cove into a 'bushland suburb'. Over several decades this design/construction/management team

redeveloped existing open spaces, established new parks, implemented a series of street closures, and adopted a policy of planting indigenous species in public places as well as encouraging local residents to follow this example in their own gardens.

For instance, at Helen Street Reserve, a bushland oasis created within a sea of medium-density apartment blocks, residents and visitors have the opportunity to meet, walk, picnic, barbecue and bird-watch in an environment that now, after 30 years, has acquired many of the qualities of the real thing. Lane Cove has indeed become a 'bushland suburb', and many of its open space and planting policies have been adopted by other Sydney municipal councils.

Sir Joseph Banks Park

The largest of Sydney's bushland parks, created in the late 1970s, was the Port Botany Open Space (now Sir Joseph Banks Park) on the north-eastern shore of Botany Bay. Over 2.5km long and covering 28ha, this park was created by sculpturing millions of cubic metres of sand dredged from the bay into a ridge of artificial dunes, which were then planted with local indigenous species. A combination of planting methods – such as Soil Conservation Service dune stabilisation techniques, direct seeding, planting tube seedlings, and fostering natural regeneration – were used to create a series of artificial ecosystems. These ranged from littoral zone grassland through coastal heath and thickets, to open woodland and freshwater swamps, which to the casual observer closely resemble natural bushland.

Earlier attempts at creating bushland parks had relied principally on the designers' intuition and observation of natural plant associations to form aesthetically pleasing arrangements where selection of species was largely dictated by availability from the Forestry Commission and a few commercial nurseries. At Port Botany, the designers, Bruce Mackenzie and Associates, sought ecological advice and ensured that a large proportion of the plant material used was propagated from local wild sources to maintain genetic integrity and to provide environmental resilience to cope with the harsh site conditions. As is the case with the Balmain parks, Mackenzie's Sir Joseph Banks Park has proved to be another successful example of his 'alternative parkland' theory.

Current trends

Some argue that bush gardens and bushland parks were simply trendy fashions of the sixties and seventies, and the current rash of hard-edged, minimalist designs tends to support this view. But what is the measure of any park's success?

Now, 30 years on, all the examples discussed are still well used, especially by local residents. I think most people would agree that there is more individual privacy, more shelter from sun and wind, more places to sit and dream, and much more to explore and discover within the rock formations and simulated bushland of the parks I have described - than there is within today's fashionable regimented rows of cabbage tree palms set in mown grass or bluestone paving.



Little to explore and discover in the current taste in harbour-side parks. Pyrmont Park, 1998.



Forty Years Down the Track

Text and Photographs by **Paul Thompson**

What follows is a personal summary of some significant elements and stages in the use of Australian plants in landscape and garden design over the forty years that I have been an enthusiast. Many people and diverse influences have contributed to the increasing commitment to Australian flora. Nurseries, public projects, literature and designers all played an important role in shaping a new landscape style that is still evolving.

Nurseries creating and responding to demand

Since the Second World War six major nurseries have supported the growth in Australian flora. When Bernhardt and Dulcie Schubert started their nursery in Noble Park in the mid-1940s there were few growers of native species. Their nursery was a supplier to people like Edna Walling, Ellis Stones and Eric Hammond as well as an inspiration to many others. Further, it was a centre for the exchange of ideas, information and example: epitomised in a 1950s pond built in the nursery after an idea from Glen Wilson. When I first visited in 1961, the nursery had a wonderland garden. The range of plants sold, and the trees, shrubs and ground cover offered have not changed much over the years. The stock has been based on the reliable and the durable, and is a mainstay of the industry.

The post-war 'Save the Forests' campaign gave rise to the Natural Resources Conservation League with bases in Springvale and at Wail. The resulting Natural Resources nurseries had mixed success but, importantly, had an influence on others.

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Allan Correy, a retired landscape architect and academic, is at present a visiting lecturer in History of Australian Landscape Architecture, in the Faculty of the Built Environment, University of New South Wales. From 1967-1970 as team leader of the Landscape Section, NSW Department of Public Works, he was involved in the design of the Australian Section at Taronga Zoo, one of the projects described in the article.

Boddy's Eastern Park Nursery in Geelong, begun by Morton and Mollie Boddy in 1951 was inspired by the love of the bush and a hatred for the Cypress pines of the Western District. The Natural Resources nursery at Wail, under Alf Gray, impressed Morton Boddy. His nursery became a source of excitement for plant collectors, conservationists and the horticulturally curious. This was a place where you could find local species, subtropical trees, Albany pitcher plants (*Cephalotus follicularis*), giant heaths from Tasmania (*Richea* spp.) and trees like the large form of *Eucalyptus caesia*.

The Wilkie family began Tree Planters Nursery in 1958. Disappointment with the directions of Natural Resources in Springvale stimulated Joyce and Alec Wilkie to begin business across the road in competition, and indeed there was a strong need at the time to supply farmers and urban Melbourne with trees. The nursery supplied about 50% trees and 50% shrubs, mostly in tubes. The proportion is now fewer trees and less tubes. At that time nurseries were centralised, freighting stock all over the state.

The above nurseries and others nurtured the interest in native species until Gwen and Rodger Elliot set a new standard of supply with Austraflo. Beginning in Bayswater in 1963 and shifting to Montrose in 1968, (oddly the year that Boddy's Nursery closed), Austraflo grew a diverse range of species and forms that took advantage of increasing knowledge of performance. Further there was an interest in local plants as well as exotic natives and the Austraflo catalogues became the principal guides for designers and enthusiasts. The solid foundation, tradition and loyal customer base of Austraflo was passed over to Bill Molyneux in 1973. Thereafter Bill and his wife Jenny continued the essence of the inheritance until management changed, leading to diversification, and then cessation, of operations.

Kurunga Nursery was born in 1983 when Evan Clucas saw an advertisement for the lease of land for \$100 and commenced business with his Austrafloa trained partner, Lee Anne Weston. This nursery is now offering in excess of 4,000 species or forms over any three-year period. When seen against the 25,000 species in our flora and about 10,000 in cultivation that is rich indeed.

Over forty years, nursery production had seen the advance of the locally indigenous nurseries, (now numbering in excess of 150 across the state). There had been an increase in acceptance of Australian plants into general nursery lines, easier purchase of greater numbers on call from a wider range of species, and new growing technology that now allows planting a whole garden from tiny cells, or by transplanting 22m high eucalypts as was done for the Forest Gallery. The nurseries both created and responded to demand, and their plants went into significant landscape projects that stimulated public interest.

Some seminal landscape projects

Monash University is a most important showcase for our flora as the content traces the period of the greatest interest in our plants and our landscape. The style of the work commenced in the early 1960s by John Stevens and Grace Fraser at the urging of Zoology Professor, Jock Marshall, is still carried on admirably in a climate of limited funds. La Trobe University too, inspires because of its landscape setting. Begun with the assistance of botanist and Landscape Architect, Professor Lindsay Pryor, it has not the same richness of detail as Melbourne or Monash. Maranoa Gardens begun in 1901 has long been useful for learning about individual plants.

In 1972-3 Glen Wilson designed the early stages of the landscape of the Patterson Lakes Project. This led the way in placing covenanted controls over the placement of all buildings and big trees and shrubs on the site. It was leading edge, ahead of its time, an idea deserving of close examination. Market forces changed the direction in 1980.

An important project in 1973 was the Gatehouse Street Garden at Royal Park. Designed by Grace Fraser for Melbourne City, it was briefed by Frank Keenan as 'a place for tourists, straight off the plane and the Tullamarine Freeway, to view Australian plants'. Unfortunately some of the original details and the idealism to develop *Themeda* grasslands and Red Gum woodlands were lost.

Changes in needs and new opportunities became evident at Royal Park during the planning, design, and community consultation conducted by Bruce Echberg. This informed the brief for the 1980 Royal Park Competition, won by Ron Jones and Brian Stafford (as the Laceworks Collaborative) with a poetic idea that defied convention and indicated an increasing awareness of, and comfort with, the subtlety of an Australian context. However, the dream is still to be fully realised.

Recognition of the desirability for restoration of local character had begun ten years earlier at Organ Pipes National Park. In a splendid effort initiated and managed by a community group, a barren weedy space was turned into an impression of a sustainable natural system.

In 1973 the theme of representing local character was an integral part of the philosophy of what I believe to be the first indigenous garden specifically designed to display the local flora – the 9ha Yarran Dheran, in Mitcham. Even more adventurous was Brian Carter's plan of imposing bush

impressions onto a Victorian streetscape in South Melbourne in the mid-1970s. His view that urban areas could be habitat for a diversity of tiny native creatures both delighted and disturbed. He deserved his Robin Boyd Environmental Award for his somewhat *avant garde* efforts.

The marvellous Merri Creek revegetation movement was gathering momentum at the same time leading to some good work by people such as Darcy Dugan and others in the early eighties. John French, a CSIRO scientist, presented convincing arguments in the early seventies about urban forests. These inspired Malvern Council in 1979 to brief a designed forest to surround Kooyong Park. Institutes such as Rusden College near Monash in 1973 adopted a theme of indigenous character with a collection within. In 1976 Hawthorn College in Auburn Road agreed to an Australian theme that survives well today. There is a significant garden built by Robert Boyle for the note-printing branch of the Royal Mint at Craigieburn.

Another project deserving mention is Winty Calder and Jeremy Pike's 1977 Master Plan for the Darebin Parklands. It originally recommended mixing exotic and native plants, an idea later adapted by others such as Jan Schapper, following the developing trend towards indigenous themes in 1984.

Freeways are continuing Australian themes, and the early section of the Eastern Freeway by Ron Rayment is still apparent in a splendid and much-admired remnant from 1968, west of Chandler Highway. Today we have adventurous abstractions of local landscapes both on the Ring Road by VicRoads and along the last stages of the Eastern Freeway Road by Tract Landscape Consultants & Woods Marsh Architects.

Public projects over the last 40 years have changed from being composed of plants from all over the place, to reproduction landscapes and abstracted forms reflecting original vegetation. The most obvious momentum for this long gestation for local planting arose from the Ecological Horticulture Lectures between 1981 and 1983 at Latrobe University organised by John Robin and Jeff Carr. However, this 'ridg-dige-indig' movement is not new and not peculiar to Australia.

The contribution of plant literature

While public places continue to affect us, it is the literature that gives us the knowledge and confidence to proceed. My view is that the best and most valuable Australian plant literature has been horticultural. The *Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants* by Rodger Elliot and David L. Jones is unbeatable as a resource for designers who have sympathy with the plants. Wrigley & Fagg, Leon Costermans, and James Hitchmough all continue to be useful. *Grow What Where* was a help at the time with its many categories but books like these need constant review.

There has been little written on landscape design for Australia. Anything written by George Seddon deserves to be absorbed, yet is not exactly design. The only book that properly considers designing with our plants with our plants is *Landscape with Australian Plants* by Glen Wilson, and it is now 25 years old. Students and professionals learn their principles from imported design texts which they then have to adapt to our conditions. Professionals have had excellent information from some teaching institutions and inspiration from the magazine *Landscape Australia*. For general reading there have been some simple guides of substance.



Gatehouse Street Park at Royal Park Melbourne designed by Grace Fraser in 1973 as a showcase of Australian plants for tourists.



Garden at Hawthorn Campus, University of Melbourne, built to a design by Paul Thompson and showing 20 years of growth.

Clusters of designers

There may be little written about the designers but there are interconnections between them which result from viewing each other's work and from personal contact. Ellis Stones influenced Gordon Ford who was affected by Walling. Glen Wilson studied under Walling and produced two gardens collaboratively with her - the Freiberg Garden in Kew and a garden in Merricks. In the 1970s the triumvirate of Alistair Knox, Gordon Ford and Peter Glass inspired Robert Boyle who goes on extending their style as his own. Glen Wilson, who has highly refined views on planting design has greatly influenced me and the many fortunate students whom he taught both in Melbourne and Canberra.

Tract Consultants, along with Chris Dance, must be mentioned for their early connection with Ellis Stones and Merchant Builders and for some of their later individual public work. Chris Dance's Esso Atrium at Southbank, was a bold, new, technically challenging garden. Carol Frank Mas, beginning practice here from South Africa in the early 1970s, quickly learnt to use our plants well in her broad commercial work such as the Knox Shopping Centre.

The presentation of BP service stations as Australian gardens at the direction of Brian Snape was most significant in the early 1980s. Bill Molyneux designed most of these with the great skill of the plantsman's eye. Regrettably, lack of a champion has seen these, like many other gardens, decline.

Many small design and construction practices have sustained a body of quality work over a long time. They are not always noticed. Geoff Sitch, working in the harsh climate of the goldfields, and Roger Stone, in Melbourne, are but two. John Arnott as a design horticulturist, late of the Melbourne Zoo and now at the Geelong Botanic Gardens, is another who has a very skilled eye and a knowledgeable touch.

Towards an Australian style

Gardens with Australian plants are the only gardens we can call Australian gardens. The plant content is the main distinguishing feature between gardens. Gardens with exotic plants are European Gardens in Australia. My belief is that there is not an apparent Australian style that rises above the plants, as is the case with the Mughal Gardens, the Japanese Garden or the English Pleasure Garden. As yet we have not displayed the cultural underpinning from which a definable individual design-culture and style emerges. Australian Gardens are still seen as Bush Gardens as described back in 1966 by Betty Maloney and Jean Walker. That type of garden usually has an informal, somewhat haphazard approach. In its most refined state it may be informal, yet it can be intricate, complex and considered in the balancing of elements. It needs to be so if it is to be tranquil.

If there are only two forms of garden, formal and informal, it follows that the uncommon type is formal. If formal means order, organisation and definition, then many gardens fall into that category. With greater understanding of plant performance, and a belief in the potential effect of simple elements, there arises a greater chance for plants as form.

This direction was part of the approach to the Australian Garden for the Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne when Taylor Cullity Lethlean and I conceived a plan composed of order within varied elements, as well as order with repetition. The varied elements are not obviously shaped. This is similar to the abstracted forest in the Forest Gallery at the Melbourne Museum where it is intended to have clear, continued definition between plantings – seemingly without intervention. Contrast this with Birrarung Marr, the new riverside park in Melbourne, where the same team, working with Ron Jones and City Projects, has developed a hard-edge garden with 1200 Cyads and highly managed plants of huge, bold, sculptural, interlocking free-form hedges. These shapes will sit against gardens that play with perspective in a modern interpretation of the Municipal Garden.

New directions are interpretations of old approaches to meet a new brief on a new site. The main way ahead is towards a method or a culture that enables good ideas to be fully realised, to mature without uninformed interference. Gardens take years before a good idea is clear. Most of what we are left with is an impoverished impression of an original idea. If we have more fully-realised, strong designs, supported by a culture of commitment (as with fine architecture or paintings), then we will more clearly see the past, hopefully celebrate it, and let it inform the future.

Acknowledgments

The following people provided information, directly or indirectly, that influenced this paper and I am most grateful for their contributions – Rob Boyle, Evan Clucas, Gwen Elliot, Grace Fraser, Elizabeth Jacka, Andrew Saniga, Jan Schapper, Bernhardt Schubert, Jane Shepherd, Brian Snape, Bruce Wilkie and Glen Wilson.

Paul Thompson has an impressive record as a designer of landscapes using Australian plants. His work includes many areas of Monash University since 1981, Yarran Dheran, and, jointly with Taylor Cullity Lethlean, the Australian Garden at the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne. His new book *The Australian Plant Design Book* will be published by Lothian in November.

Bush Garden Ethos in South Australia

By David Jones



The bush garden ethos in South Australia, notwithstanding the state's dearth of water, poor soils and Mediterranean climate, has been slow in evolving.

Even today, the logical Mediterranean philosophical arguments of Trevor Nottle, expressed in *Gardens of the Sun*,¹ are passed over in favour of struggling or often over-watered gardens containing ubiquitous 'Iceberg' roses, an eclectic exotic collection of plants, and the odd umbrageous eucalypt.²

Differing views

In the 1880s the prominent South Australian Conservator of Forests (1876-1890), John Ednie Brown, castigated the use of eucalypts in ornamental and street tree roles.³ His exception, and that of botanic gardens director Richard Schomburgk, surveyor-general George Goyder and other senior bureaucrats, was the use of South Australian Blue Gums (*E. leucoxylon*), Sugar Gums (*E. cladocalyx*) and River Red Gums (*E. camaldulensis*) in shelter-belt plantings and where economic forestry was occurring.⁴ Even long-standing City of Adelaide City Gardener (1899-1932), August Pelzer, claimed that 'a tremendous mistake has been made in planting too many gum trees; . . . with the progress of Arboriculture gum trees will have to make room for Oriental, Mediterranean, and South American species.'⁵

The contradictory voice came from South Australian individuals, often with Quaker associations, who instigated innovative native plant propagating and revegetation projects. In the 1920s – 40s, they established what could be successfully grown in the public domain in South Australia. Leaders in this endeavour included:

Edwin Ashby (1861-1941) at Blackwood

William Burdett (1871-1940) at Basket Range

Ken Stuckey (1910-1991) at Furner in the South-East

Kenneth (1924-1951) and Roy (b.1927) Gray, the sons of Alfred Gray (1896-1981)

Albert Morris (1886-1939) with his Quaker wife, Ellen Margaret née Sayce (1882-1957) at Broken Hill⁶.

Their passionate inquiry into semi-arid and Mediterranean-environment conducive Australian and South African species has resulted in a wide selection of non-exotic plants relevant to South Australia but little used and respected.

An enlightened conservationist, Ashby experimented with alternative methods of propagation and watering systems, developing the 'Ashby deep penetration system'. He also contributed to *Australian Gardening of To-day* (1943), based on weekly articles in the *Express & Journal*, and advocated that 'native shrubs can be grown on the Adelaide Plains at less cost of time and labour than ordinary gardening'. Alison Ashby (1901-1987) and Enid Robertson (b.1925) continued the family passion of this inquiry. The Burdetts laid out a 'wonderful private garden ... of wilderness and garden art combined', where contoured paths meandered through over 1,000 species including eucalypts, erica and protea spp. Stuckey was a pioneer in Australian plant cultivation and an avid collector, activities that resulted in an extensive private collection of proteaceae including numerous *Grevillea*, *Banksia*, *Isopogon*, and *Dryandra* spp.

In the 1930s Morris initiated and guided the development of revegetation plantations and parklands in and around Broken Hill, NSW, comprising an area of 13km called the Common. He concluded that species grown from seed collected from local native flora withstood drought conditions better than introduced species and that 'if the land was fenced from stock and rabbits, the area would regenerate naturally.'

Instead, eucalypts were romanticised. This love, albeit in aestheticism, was also embraced in an acceptance of Hans Heysen paintings of the South Australian landscape, and a fondness and admiration for the creation of national parks and national pleasure resorts to protect semi-natural landscapes as well as the grand River Red Gums.⁷ The majesty of the tree was celebrated by the community and its leaders but not its acceptance as a feature in the garden or in the public park.

Raising the profile of Australian plants

Australian Plants Society veteran Ivan Holliday raised the profile of these plants in *Growing Australian Plants*,⁸ and landscape architect Allan Correy sought the use of them in every private and public project he was involved in while in South Australia (1964-67).⁹ Correy, and

landscape designers Ray Holliday, and Robin Hill were the main proponents of native plants in design applications in the 1960s often laying the acceptance of them for use in 1970s projects.¹⁰ Correy's private gardens in Burnside, Loxton, Leabrook and Rostrevor, with their richness of native trees and shrubs, and perhaps the first use of railway sleepers in a public landscape project in South Australia, are still treasured by their often long-standing owners. While in charge of the West Lakes landscape, Holliday pioneered mangrove propagation and continued to argue and use native plants in his design projects.¹¹ Hill, with prominent architect Peter Muller, successfully explored the possibilities of Adelaide-relevant plants in the Michell residence and the former IPEC headquarters.¹² At the same time Highways South Australia was often chain-sawing eucalypts in the 'name of progress'.

The native plant planting philosophy of time echoed the values of Correy:

*This philosophy, echoing [Chicago] Prairie School ideas, was exhibited in ... plants [that] were used to provide strength, verticality, colour and texture. Eucalypts, particularly Lemon-scented Gums, South Australian Blue Gums and Ironbarks, were extensively used. Shrubs tended to highlight tree colour and texture. Ground covers, including Creeping Boobialla, Purple Coral-pea, and Hypericum patulum, were used in masses rather than as decorative features, drawing inspiration from [Lawrence] Halprin's [west coast USA] work. Local rock and stone, often in conjunction with second-hand railway sleepers, were applied as edges to accentuate topographical changes and as textured focal points.*¹³

In the Dunstan period fascination with, and use of, native plants was at its highest in South Australia. Amidst its green gentrification led by prominent architect and mayor, Brian Polomka, the suburbia of Norwood was 'invaded' with Ironbarks (*E. sideroxylon*), pocket parks, *Grevillea* spp., *Acacia* spp., and street closures. Monarto was designed with a semi-arid environmental agenda with assistance from Geoff Sanderson and Peter Bulman aided by Holliday, Tract from Melbourne, Walling, and Professor Pryor.¹⁴

During these years a 'hallmark' palette of native plants was draped over South Australia. Central were the Ironbarks, South Australian Blue Gums, River Red Gums, Lemon-scented Gums (*E. citriodora*) and a choice selection of *Acacia*, *Grevillea*, *Eremophila* spp. River Red and Jarrah railway sleepers became commonplace garden features whether as edging, walling or steps. There was also stone masonry - with Mintaro slate, Carey Gully and Basket Range sandstone for lawn edging, low wet and dry retaining walls, and crazy paving. Highway South Australia's attitudes to native species were also to change markedly in the 1970s as witnessed along the South-Eastern Freeway and in the innovative revegetation work, led by John Beswick, along the Dukes Highway. The River Torrens Linear Park, the largest integrated urban

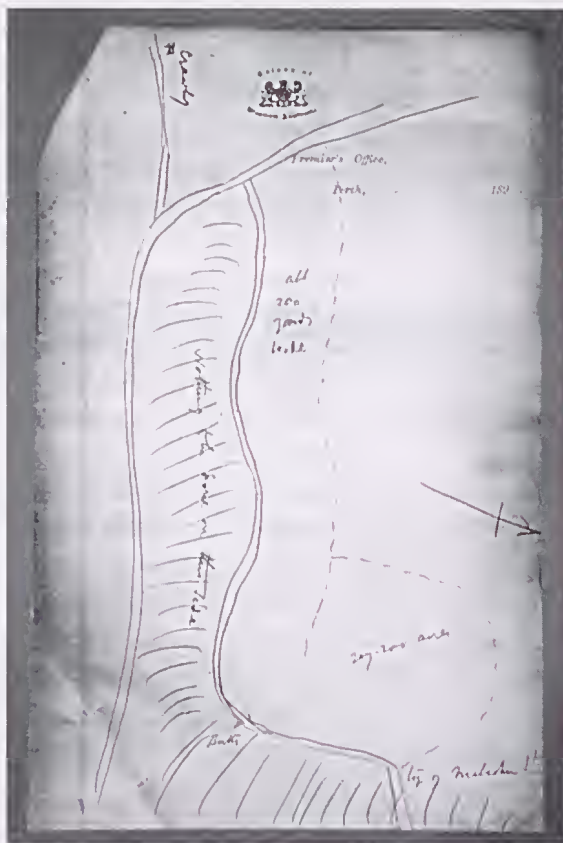
stormwater project in Australia, managed by Land Systems Ltd and subsequently by Hassell Ltd, drew together an array of disciplines. There was a common acceptance that the use of natives was preferable for the entire tract of the river as they were part of its aesthetic, and they enabled quality water cleansing and watercourse stabilisation, and thereby reduction of flooding.¹⁵

These hallmarks continue to delight yet still contribute to emotional community planning debates in South Australia. It is more often the tree, and the native tree especially, that is the crux of political debate. Indeed, the design and gazettal of recent significant tree legislation has been driven by chain-sawing of 100-500 year old eucalypts in prosperous leafy eastern and southern suburbs.¹⁶ A similar passionate debate between Spotted Gums (*E. maculata*) and exotics is currently stifling the North Terrace Urban Design Project.¹⁷

The real ethos of bush gardens in South Australia has yet to be realised. It will only be addressed when the reality of water use, cost, and quality is fully understood in the community, and where a shift to Mediterranean planting strategies occurs.

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John Forrest's sketch (1895) showing the beginnings of his 'grand vision' for the park. Courtesy State Records Office, WA.



Main entrance avenue, replanted with Lemon-scented Gums 1938.



Kings Park: Changing Visions, Changing Values, 1895-1995

Text and Photographs by **Oline Richards**

In the second of the unpublished papers from last year's National Conference, Oline Richards traces the development of Kings Park over the past 100 years, revealing the influence of social and economic trends on John Forrest's original vision for the park.

The book *Planting the Nation* includes the author's essay on the development of public parks and reserves in Western Australia during the federation period from 1890 to 1914, and highlights the importance of this period in the development of the state's recreational landscapes. This paper looks at Western Australia's most notable federation landscape - Kings Park in Perth, probably the best known of any of Perth's public parks and arguably its most-loved public place.

Kings Park is unique for several reasons. It is a large park by any standards, 1000 acres, or 400 hectares, in extent. It is close to the centre of the capital city Perth and is justifiably renowned for its

panoramic views over the city and the Swan River. The park is unusual in that it is comprised of highly developed parkland areas and large tracts of remnant indigenous vegetation; the bushland covering roughly two thirds of the park. The uneasy relationship of landscaped park and urban bush has been a central theme throughout the history of the park.

The focus of this paper is the changing perceptions of the park - from its beginnings in the 1890s, during the gold boom era in Western Australian history, to the post World War II period, the second boom period of growth and development in the state's history.

A remarkable act of confidence

Western Australia was granted self-government in October 1890, the last of the Australian colonies to achieve this milestone. And although it was the largest colony in geographical terms, covering one third of the continent, it was the smallest in terms of population with less than 50,000 white inhabitants. In this context it was a remarkable act of confidence (or bravado) for John Forrest, the surveyor-general and commissioner of crown lands, to make 1000 acres of crown land available for a public park at this time. Forrest was elected as Western Australia's first premier soon after, and went on to serve a record 10 year term in office, before entering the first federal parliament in 1901.



DNA Tower at the head of the long broadwalk through the bushland, erected in 1966.



Pioneer Women's Memorial dedicated 1968.



Panoramic views over Perth Water and the city.

He was to take a close personal interest in the park, particularly during its formative years in the 1890s and early 1900s - a time when the state was transformed from an impoverished colonial outpost to a thriving state in the Commonwealth of Australia. Forrest was the first president of the park board and retained the position until his death in 1918. His vision for the park was therefore critical in these early years and his influence was a decisive factor in its development.

What then was his vision for the park? There is no doubt Forrest's plans were ambitious. In his mind's eye he envisaged magnificent carriage drives extending throughout the whole of the park; ornamental walks for pedestrian promenading and picturesque lakes alive with swans and other water birds. He saw endless scope for improvements and thought that £100,000 might well be spent in developing this concept.

The models he had in mind were Centennial Park in Sydney, and the Botanic Gardens in Melbourne, both much smaller in extent. Even Centennial Park, about 220 hectares, was little more than half the size of Kings Park. With a budget of only £500 Forrest embarked on the massive undertaking - the grand visions notwithstanding.

The initial work was concentrated on clearing the bush for the scenic drives and laying out the paths. His instructions to the supervisor covered nine key points and were accompanied by a freehand sketch drawn by the Premier himself.

At this early stage Forrest was concerned with clearing the bush to open up the spectacular views over the city and the Swan River. However, he was also concerned that areas of attractive scrub, flowering shrubs, well-grown trees and clumps of banksia should be left intact. Even the occasional picturesque dead tree was to be left for aesthetic effect.

Despite this early emphasis on the protection of the indigenous vegetation, it is open to question whether Forrest, or the other board members, had an image of the park as a bushland wonderland. At a meeting in September 1895 there was discussion about 'leaving a certain amount' of natural bush but 'nothing definite was settled'. And indeed it was to be more than 40 years before the park board finally committed itself to a bushland policy and even then the decision was to retain a limited area of bushland vegetation.

A sight never to be forgotten

Regardless of this ambiguity commentators on the park during this early phase were enthusiastic about the beauty of the vegetation - and of course the spectacular views. May Vivienne, the popular, rather effusive, travel writer, described 'the view from Mount Eliza on a spring morning . . . when every wild bush is ablaze with flowers' as 'a sight never to be forgotten'.

William Guilfoyle on a visit to Perth around 1904 described Kings Park as 'one of the most lovely sites' for a park. 'Its beautiful vegetation - the Hakea, Dryandra, Banksia, Acacia, Casuarina and . . . Christmas Tree [were] sufficient to endear it to the heart of a botanist.' He thought it would 'be an awful pity to destroy any more than [was] absolutely necessary', and concluded: 'You couldn't grow exotic vegetation to equal it inside 50 years.'

Despite his enthusiasm he also recommended some judicious clearing to establish lawns and flowerbeds; to open up the best views; and for landscape effects. He thought the drives 'very nearly perfect', but also felt the development of 'so fine a park' demanded a scheme on a grander scale than had so far been achieved.

Official government publications at this time also praised the park as 'one of the most beautiful pleasure grounds' in WA, with the preservation of 'the indigenous trees and flora' being 'one of the features of the park'.



Aboriginal War Memorial dedicated 2000.

Such enthusiasm for the local bush may indeed seem in advance of its time, and in today's terms, to reflect well on the park's founding fathers. Over the last 50 years examples such as these have been cited as evidence that the park was intended from the outset to remain a bushland reserve. However, there is ample evidence to suggest that had the resources been available to develop the park in the first decades of the 20th century, it would be a very different place today. After all, the park was intended not only to compare favourably with the established parks in the other colonies, but was to surpass them as well!

A problem with all of these historic statements about the bushland in the park was that there was no definition of what a 'bushland sanctuary' might mean in practical terms, and no statement about how much of the park should be retained as a bushland reserve. As one historian has noted, Forrest, like other notable premiers after him, 'was given to outlining grand plans and leaving others to carry them out without sufficiently explicit guidelines'. For, as well as having visions of a landscaped park, Forrest also talked about the park as 'a sanctuary of bushland right in the heart of the city' which would 'enable the children a thousand years hence, to see what the bush was like when Stirling came to found a city'.

To further complicate the issue, Forrest proposed mixed plantings of exotics along the carriage-drives throughout the park, to provide colour and a contrast to the indigenous vegetation, suggesting such exotics as oleanders, magnolias, planes and oaks.

While there is considerable evidence that the early settlers and later colonists were appreciative of the local wildflowers, the bushland on Mount Eliza also had its detractors. James Battye, the State Librarian, and a newcomer to Western Australia, writing in 1912, thought the vegetation in the park had a prehistoric look to it that was depressing. But conceded there was 'a stern beauty in the scenery that with time grows on one'.

Some 50 years later, in the early 1960s, another recent arrival, Paul Ritter, the newly appointed Perth City Planner, was to set the cat among the pigeons when he described the bushland in Kings Park as 'mediocre scrub' and earned himself a feisty rebuke in verse from [Dame] Mary Durack.



Kings Park bushland walk.

However, it was sentiments such as these that gave credence to the claim that only a person born and bred in Western Australia could appreciate the local bush.

A clear social vision

Apart from its physical character, Forrest also had a clear social vision for Kings Park. When the park was established in the mid-1890s, it was called Perth Park – not an inspired name you might think – but it did underscore the intention that it was to be a park for the people of Perth. A park that was worthy of a democratic society, open to everyone in the community, and which local people could regard with pride.

While the park was clearly for the recreation and enjoyment of the citizens and a healthy 'breathing space' in the urban environment, Forrest also saw it as a means for elevating the cultural aspirations of the community. Along with the other new institutions such as the museum, library, art gallery and observatory, which were also established during this buoyant period, it was to be a refining influence in the hitherto frontier society.

Despite the constraints imposed by a limited budget, the dominant features in the park were laid down in the years up to World War One. They remain essentially the same to the present day: the main scenic drives; the tree-lined entrance avenues; the terraces and pathways on the steep limestone escarpment; the ornamental pavilions; and the gate lodges and tearooms.

Also during this period the park assumed the mantle of the state's national shrine. It was a role that grew in significance in the decades to come. The first memorial in the park was erected in 1902 to honour the West Australian men who had served in South Africa in the Boer War. The Queen Victoria statue and the Leake Memorial, honouring the imperial connections and a civic leader, followed soon after.

Today there are some 50 memorials in the park, both civic memorials honouring notable individuals and a large number of war memorials – including the State War Memorial, and the impressive honour avenues.



Subiaco entrance avenue, planted with *Washingtonia* palms c. 1910.

As this tradition became firmly established, a memorial in the park inferred added status, but despite the egalitarian ethos underpinning the park, it was not until after World War II that the board was to approve a memorial to a female citizen.

In the early 1930s, an appeal was made to the board to allow a memorial to be erected to the prominent community worker and social activist, Edith Cowan, following her death in 1932. Despite her high standing in the community, and her groundbreaking achievement as Australia's first woman parliamentarian, the board denied her the honour of a memorial in the park. At the time it was a contentious decision and revealed the entrenched bias of the board and its supporters. Today one of Western Australia's universities bears Edith Cowan's name and her image appears on our \$50 note. It is a testimony to the shift in public opinion that has taken place since that time.

Following the hiatus of World War II - when the armed services occupied Kings Park to protect the city's water supply and air raid shelters were built there for the use of the local population - Western Australia experienced an economic boom and population explosion, fuelled by an influx of migrants from overseas and workers from interstate. Perth, like most other cities in the nation, experienced a rapid expansion of the metropolitan area, and a shift in the social attitudes and values of the community.

The conservation movement, which had been gaining strength in the inter-war years, took on a higher public profile and demands for greater recognition came from previously marginalized groups in society, such as women and aborigines. Not surprisingly, given its popularity and iconic status as a symbol of local identity, Kings Park was not immune to the impact of this changing climate of opinion.

Protecting the park's bushland

Protection of the park's bushland became a cause celebre in the 1950s, when Perth City Council put forward proposals for an Olympic swimming pool in the park. The 'Pool in the Park' debate raged on through most of the decade and, despite legislation enacted in 1954 aimed specifically at preventing the construction of the pool, two further attempts, to achieve this end, were made and defeated in parliament, in 1957 and 1959.

Alienation of the land in the park was not a new phenomenon: Royal Kings Park Tennis Club, the Kings Park Bowling Club and Hale School all had long established sporting facilities within the park boundaries. There had been previous requests for land for the University of Western Australia, and for a major public hospital. There was also a proposal to relocate Government House to a site in Kings Park. While such requests had been rejected, it was mainly for technical reasons, as such uses did not comply with the conditions under which the land had been reserved - that is for public recreation.

In the early stages of the campaign much of the argument against 'The Pool in the Park' was highly emotive and it was not too clear whether the opposition was over appropriation of public land or over the destruction of the bush. There even seemed to be an anti-authoritarian element directed at the parliament, the park board (which was in favour of the pool), and the Perth City Council.

An important outcome of the controversy was a serious study of the conservation values of the park undertaken by the local scientific community, spear-headed by the WA Naturalists' Club. For probably the first time conservation of the bushland was presented from an ecological viewpoint which among other things, exposed the weaknesses of previous planting policies which had seen the introduction of non-local indigenous species in the bushland areas.

The point was made at the time that the ecological approach was a specialist one and was not likely to be understood or necessarily embraced by the wider community. And this remains one of the paradoxes associated with the Kings Park bushland. For while the bushland occupies by far the greater area of the park, and any encroachment is fiercely opposed, it is the least popular part of the park in terms of public use.

The 'Pool in the Park' campaigns polarised the community, and although the opponents of the pool were ultimately successful, public support for their stand was by no means universal. On the one hand the public debate over the issue revealed the depth of community sentiment associated with the park, and on the other, growing support for the conservation movement. It also marked a watershed in the history of the park.



Kings Park bushland.

A trendsetting botanic garden

Plans to establish a botanic garden, featuring the state's indigenous flora, were approved by parliament and the park's first director, Dr John Beard, was appointed in 1961 to oversee its establishment. The Kings Park botanic garden was a trendsetter at the time and was the forerunner of similar botanic collections of indigenous flora established in other places throughout Australia. Beard's appointment also marked a significant shift to a more professional management regime for the park and a new emphasis on scientific research.

As well as laying the foundations for the development of the park as a scientific institution, in another paradoxical twist, it was during Beard's term as director that the purpose of Kings Park as a recreational facility and not as a bushland reserve was reconfirmed. Popular new features were introduced: the long broadwalk and vista, which cut a swathe through the bush and opened up the interior of the park that was considered to be 'featureless and dull'; the DNA observation tower; the innovative children's adventure playground; and the Wittenoom floral clock - a popular if anachronistic feature from the 19th century.

Under Beard, Kings Park developed expertise in the propagation and cultivation of Western Australian flora and encouraged home owners to plant the local species in their gardens. A more inclusive attitude to memorials also emerged, along with recognition of the park's significance to Aboriginal people.

In 1995 Kings Park celebrated its centenary, producing two important documents: a bushland management plan, and a 10-year framework plan for the enhancement of the parkland areas. After 100 years the park now has clearly defined policies for the management of its two component areas.

However, an important legacy of the past uncertainties is the need to reconcile the competing, and often, incompatible interests, of a major public park in the heart of the capital city, and an equally important area of remnant urban bushland. Exotic species once widely planted throughout the park and along the main drives - including the honour avenues - are

now considered 'weeds' in the context of a bushland reserve. Other elements of the park, which can rightfully be considered important in the cultural landscape heritage of Perth, are being reshaped and replanted to conform to bushland conservation values.

There are no easy answers to this dilemma, but it is surely an issue that should be of interest to the Australian Garden History Society. There can be no doubt that if the current trends continue, by the time the park celebrates its bicentenary in 100 years time - it will be a very different place.

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A retired landscape architect and professional historian, **Oline Richards** has a special interest in West Australian landscape and garden history. With a keen commitment to heritage conservation she has undertaken heritage studies for numerous sites in Western Australia, and she is author of *War Memorials in Western Australia* (1996), *Designed Landscapes in Western Australia* (1997) and a contributor to the *Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens and Horticulture* (2002).



Ainslie Village Canberra: a ponding basin. The rock outcrops are 'dissipaters' that break the force of roof run-off and spread it into the pond.
Photo: Glen Wilson.



Courtyard at E.R. Squibb (now Bristol Myers Squibb Pharmaceuticals Pty Ltd) at Noble Park, Victoria. Photo: Glen Wilson



Freiberg Garden, Kew. Photo: Paul Thompson

Landscapes with an Australian Character



The Work of Glen Wilson

By **Suzanne Hunt**

In front of Glen Wilson's home in Canberra tall eucalyptus trees fill the space usually reserved for a garden. Their majestic trunks make quite a statement in an otherwise ordinary streetscape and eloquently illustrate his design philosophy -to create a landscape with a 'truly Australian character'.¹

Wilson's career in landscape design and construction spanned nearly fifty years, from the 1950s to the 1990s. He is modest about his achievements, which are considerable, and highly regarded by landscape practitioners and those interested in using native plant material. Similar to many in his profession he started out as a part-time nurseryman, took on construction work and later became a talented designer, in his words 'almost by default'. He also worked as a lecturer at RMIT, at Oakleigh Technical College and at the Canberra College of Advanced Education (CCAEE).

In 1993 the Landscape Industries Association of Victoria gave him their award for his contribution to the industry and a survey conducted by Catherine Bull, published in *Landscape Australia* in June 2000, named him one of the most influential writers on landscape issues in Australia. His book, *'Landscaping with Australian Plants'* (1975), is still regarded as the seminal work on the subject.

Inspirations: the Schuberts and Walling

As a child Wilson remembers many happy family outings to the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne but he acknowledges that it was the Schubert Nursery display garden in Noble Park and the writings of Edna Walling that had most impact in determining the direction of his career. In the 1950s a small selection of Australian plants was available in established nurseries, but they were not very popular with the general public. Most people, including the nurserymen who sold them, lacked both the expertise and understanding necessary to use them effectively in the designed landscape.

Bernhardt and Dulcie Schubert began growing Australian plants in their backyard in Oakleigh and later established a small nursery in the Grampians area of Victoria. In the early 1950s they moved to Bowmore Road, Noble Park in suburban Melbourne. Beside their nursery site they established a display garden to show the flowering and growth habit of the plants for



Ainslie Village Canberra: 'the villabong' that receives about half of the run-off from the site. Photo: Glen Wilson

sale and also to demonstrate how Australian plants could be combined to imitate their natural environment. In addition they perfected a new method of planting out in sawdust. Their ideas were revolutionary. Leaf litter was left where it fell, paths were not raked and manicured lawns were definitely taboo. Wilson was excited at what he saw.

His busy schedule during this period included trying to establish a nursery in Springvale, part-time work for a die-cast out-source firm, undertaking a propagation course at Burnley Horticultural College, and juggling the demands of family life.

One day, when buying plants at Schubert's nursery, he heard that Walling was short of work and was keen to take on some paying students to tide her over financially. Wilson knew the type of work she was interested in and had read many of her books, including *The Australian Roadside*.² The main thrust of this book was to awaken in the general public an appreciation for the subtle characteristics of the Australian landscape. It implored landscape designers to stop:

'tidying and 'dolling up' (of) the ground with specimen plants after an inordinate amount of crushing and destroying of natural beauty has taken place. It is the landscaper's job to conserve and to re-create the natural scene. This requires, above all else, a thorough knowledge of native plants, and a taste for Nature's informal way of doing things, as against man's assertive formalism'.³

Walling's avant garde ideas struck a chord with Wilson. He jumped at the chance to learn more. Quickly making an appointment, he submitted his drawings and he now has the honour of being the only paying pupil that she ever took on.

At their first interview Walling commented that she did not think she could teach him very much about laying out trees but added, 'I don't think you know enough about the third dimension'.⁴ Learning about the use of voids and space in the landscape was a priceless legacy imparted through her teaching.

Walling involved Wilson in some of her jobs and introduced him to the Hammonds, Eric and his son Bob, who did all her construction work. Eric Hammond had an excellent reputation. He had been selected to construct the playing fields and sprinting tracks for the 1956 Olympic Games, and later to reinstate the Melbourne Cricket Ground to accommodate games of cricket and football. The Hammonds specialised in building all forms of garden structures from garden walls to ponds, pergolas, and broad-scale grassing of playing fields, bowling greens and grass tennis court construction as well as porous tennis courts.

Significant work: the Freiberg Garden, the Squibb Courtyard and Patterson Lakes

Walling wanted Wilson to work with her on the Freiberg garden in Kew. It was a steep and difficult site. Hammond built the retaining walls and Wilson was engaged to put in all the native plants. At the conclusion of the job Hammond was so impressed with Wilson's work that he offered him the position of foreman. Wilson recalls how:

'over the next eight years, by my own ability, I became one of the bosses. I was never actually given any authority, I merely assumed it by hard work and ability and was recognised by all the men on the job as a boss. In fact my position couldn't have been much different had I some equity in the business – except on pay day!'⁵

Wilson's brief expanded to include interviewing prospective clients, estimating and tendering for other landscape work, designing and job supervision. One of the designs he is most proud of is the courtyard constructed in 1969 for E.R. Squibb and Sons at Noble Park. Paul Geehan's article in *Landscape Australia* praises this work as a 'unique combination of fine detail design and of craftsmanship: an example of what 'design and construct' should be capable of but seldom is, in our contemporary, highly competitive industry'.⁶



Lake Legana; Patterson Lakes, Carrum, Victoria. Photo: Glen Wilson

It is interesting to note that red, white and yellow azaleas were chosen over native plants to complement the modernist lines of the water feature. It was a clever choice as their sharp contrasting colour scheme had an impact far greater than native plants would have had against the clean, sleek lines of the building. Wilson's design layout was a triumph and so accurate that when the formwork was revealed the tiles could be applied to the curving sides without fudging – quite an achievement. He wryly observed that Walling would have been scandalised by the project because she hated anything 'modern'. Working for the Hammonds proved to be an invaluable training ground affording him the opportunity to use both native and introduced species of plants into formal and informal landscapes – culminating in his maturity as a designer.

Eventually Wilson decided to try something different. He was engaged to establish a nursery for a proposed development in Point Cook but when this project collapsed he transferred his skills to help organise and establish another plant nursery supplying advanced stock for the Gladesville Development Group's, Patterson Lakes project located at Carrum beach. The company had purchased a thousand acres, spread either side of the Patterson River. The land was virtually denuded of vegetation with the lower regions often covered with shallow brackish water. The idea of cutting lakes for a waterway residential scheme through this area was an enterprising concept in landscape construction in Victoria. The spoil from the excavation works was used to raise the level of the land around the lakes to a minimum of eight feet above sea level to support housing and vegetation.

Wilson was asked to take charge of the design component during Stage One. The proposal he instigated was both original and progressive. Not only did it advocate the establishment of a dense upper canopy of native vegetation, it suggested guidelines be determined to control the environment so that the Australian character of the landscape would be maintained by future residents. – a concept ahead of its time. Wilson's policy was later carried into Stages Two and Three by Paul Thompson and Marilyn Evans.

New directions: lecturing, writing and travel

Unfortunately a recession in 1974 curtailed his further involvement with the project and he moved to Canberra taking up a lecturing position in the Landscape Design Department, School of Environmental Design at the Canberra College of Advanced Education (CCAEE).

Walling is given the credit for getting him interested in joining the 'talking circuit'. During 1957 when she was unable to attend a garden club function, she asked him to speak in her place. Wilson recalls:

*I was crazy enough to agree. How well I remember walking from my car to the hall wondering how I could have let myself in for such an ordeal! By then I did have some slides as I had acquired my first camera, my Petri Greenmatic – which I still have. Somehow I struggled through the evening and the 'gardeners' seemed pleased enough. I often wonder had I refused to do that, would I ever have become a professional lecturer?*⁷

When his book, *Landscape with Australia Plants*, was published in 1975 speaking engagements would take him around the country from Adelaide to Sydney – a far cry indeed from his humble beginnings.

He began writing for the *Australian Garden Lover* in the late 1950s, and contributed articles on design for the *Age* newspaper. He also wrote a number of significant articles for *Landscape Australia*, notably 'Towards an Australian Style of Landscape Design' which appeared in the first volume. In 1983 he combined his talents with Rodger Elliot to produce a series of eight articles covering the many facets to be considered when using Australian plants. For instance topics such as the beauty of clean tree trunks, small and large shrub combinations, trees with multi-trunks in close stands, and an observation of the natural landscape, were discussed in detail. The following message from the first series illustrates how fresh his ideas were and how relevant they still are almost twenty years on.

*The vast dry continent with its unique flora is in sore need of sensitive, understanding landscape-designers who love and respect the land and who will work to maintain and re-establish its true landscape character. After 200 years, our poor efforts in this direction are tragic; now softened in the view of some by the recent change to the use of a few Australian plants, with little if any real change in our fundamental philosophy. That we should be developing a philosophy based largely on 'dryland' planting must now be apparent to those within the industry.*⁸

'Dryland' planting continued to fascinate Wilson and in 1978-79 he took sabbatical leave from the CCAE to study the vegetation of the Negev desert region in Israel. Another important work, 'Amenity Planting in Arid Zones'⁹, resulted from his research there.

Later work: Ainslie Village and professional associations

After his retirement from the CCAE in 1982, the firm Denton Corker Marshall appointed Wilson to supervise and design a landscape plan for Ainslie Village, Canberra. The 'Village' (a cluster-complex of dwellings) was situated on a steep slope. A decision to have an above ground drainage system to control the stormwater through the site was challenging. The idea of using a 'natural drainage' system harnessed by judicious planting was unusual and attracted much interest in Australia. The theory behind such a scheme was that some run-off would be absorbed into the ground where it was most beneficial. Excess water could also be captured in ornamental ponds. Wilson was involved with the project until the work ran out and he finally decided to retire from landscaping in 1992.

During the 1960s a number of meetings were held in Adelaide and Melbourne to discuss the possibility of forming a professional institute of landscape architects. With the establishment of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) this was realised. Wilson was invited to submit a portfolio of drawings to the review panel and subsequently was admitted as a Foundation Member (Associate) in 1968. He was also a founding member of the Society for Growing Australian Plants. A man of many creative talents he has written a number of plays and over seventy short stories. He continues to be passionately interested in native plants, collecting *Callistemon* species - varieties and cultivars - and he still has a few pertinent comments to make about the work produced by landscape designers today!

Glen Wilson has recently donated several of Edna Walling's hand-coloured plans to the Archive of Garden History at the State Library of Victoria. He also intends to gift his own personal collection of landscape drawings and large photographic slide collection. These will be important sources of material for people interested in studying the history of landscapes designed with native plants or those wishing to interpret the work and philosophical intent of one of Australia's influential and innovative pioneer landscape construction-designers.

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Suzanne Hunt is a social historian and former museum curator, currently researching the sociology of gardening in Victoria. As Archives Co-ordinator for the Victorian Branch of the AGHS, she is working with the State Library of Victoria to build up the repository of material in the Garden History Archive established in 1999.



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Grevillea 'Sandra Gordon' growing at Myall Park Botanic Garden. Courtesy Carol McCormack



Grevillea 'Merinda Gordon'
Courtesy Carol McCormack



Preservation by Cultivation

The genesis and growth of the Australian Plants Society

By **Gwen and Rodger Elliot**

The Australian Plants Society came into being as the Society for Growing Australian Plants in 1957. The previous year the writer on Australian plants for 'Your Garden' magazine, Arthur Swaby, had made the suggestion, in the April 1956 issue, that a society for the 'growers of Australian plants' be formed. The response was most encouraging and an inaugural meeting was held in the Horticultural Hall, Victoria Street, Melbourne, on March 12th, 1957. About 200 people attended and the Society was established. Many of the early members were also affiliated with the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria.

Within the next few years regional groups were formed throughout Australia. One of the phrases frequently used to describe the aims and objectives of the Society was 'Preservation by Cultivation'. The Parry family, who operated an Australian plant cut-flower farm and nursery at Kariong via Gosford in NSW, had originally used this motto, and it was subsequently adopted by the SGAP with their blessing.

Today the Society has active groups operating in all states. In Victoria there are 27 regional groups that meet regularly to hear guest speakers, share information, organise excursions and garden visits, participate in displays, flower shows and the maintenance of local reserves. There are 29 regional groups in New South Wales, 20 in Queensland, 14 in South Australia, 14 in Western Australia, 4 in Tasmania, 1 in Canberra, and 1 in Northern Territory.

In addition to these, there are 29 different study groups. Some concentrate on particular plant families, such as the Australian Daisy Study Group and the Palm and Cycad Study Group, others focus on specific genera such as *Acacia* and *Epacris*, or on topics like Australian Food Plants, Containers, Garden Design, and the Rainforest.

In recent years several states voted to change their name from the Society for Growing Australian Plants to the Australian Plants Society. This change has not been made by all groups: some retain the older name, while others, like the Western Australian group (known primarily as the Wildflower Society of Western Australia), have an individual name. However, all groups are under the same umbrella organisation - the Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants.

In an organisation of this size, with a history of nearly 50 years, many, many people have made a significant contribution to the society, and to the interest in growing Australian plants. An impressive number of these people have also contributed to the literature now available on our Australian flora. Many past and present members are well known through their writing. They include the Boddy family, A. E. Brooks, Bill Cane, Jean Galbraith, Ivo Hammett, Alby and Hyam Lindner, Fred Rogers and Arthur Swaby in Victoria/Tasmania; Inez Armitage, Alex Blombery, George and Peter Althofer, Thistle Harris and the Parry family in New South Wales; Dave Gordon in Queensland; members of the Ashby family, Ken Stuckey and others in South Australia; plus Rica Erickson, Alf Gray (also Victoria) and Ken Newbey in WA, - to name but a few from a very long list.

The Australian Plants Society has played a major role in increasing the available knowledge on our native plants and stimulating the upsurge of interest in the Australian flora. From its beginning the APS provided an opportunity for enthusiasts to meet together and share information on both plants and cultivation experiences. In those early years information on the growing of our Australian flora was extremely limited. Very few books on Australian plants were to be had, and horticultural colleges, in the courses they offered, made little or no reference to the uses of Australian plants in cultivated gardens. For many Australian plant enthusiasts it was necessary to find information for themselves, and in this endeavour the Society for Australian Plants played a major role.

In 1959, a quarterly magazine with the simple title 'Australian Plants' was launched. Illustrated with eye-catching colour photographs, each issue was eagerly awaited by SGAP members. Under managing editor Bill Payne, who has held that position from the very beginning, the publication is now approaching its 200th edition, and is available with membership or by separate subscription.

Many Australian plants have been introduced to cultivation, not only by the nursery industry, but also by individual enthusiasts and members of the Society. Botanists undertaking the study of particular plant families and genera have frequently received invaluable help from the Society and its enthusiasts. Indeed the Society and its members have often been instrumental in setting up municipal parks and reserves to display Australian flora, with volunteers providing countless hours of unpaid contribution in this regard.

Today the Australian Plants Society continues to play a very positive role in the sharing of information on Australian plants. Its membership is primarily in Australia, but there are also quite a number of overseas members, particularly in Europe and U.S.A. The quest for information continues, as does the enthusiasm for introducing Australian plants into gardens and nurseries.

Recent years have witnessed an ever-increasing environmental awareness as ongoing development in Australia has seen many species threatened with extinction. There is now a strong interest in cultivating indigenous species, that is those native to a particular area, rather than those simply native to the broader region of Australia. This goes hand in hand with more general environmental awareness, and recognition of the vital links between plants, insects, birds, mammals and indeed our own human health. Further, the Australian Plants Society plays an important role in promoting the conservation of plant habitats as well as encouraging the planting of native Australian species.

Further information on your nearest group can be obtained from the ASGAP internet site – <http://www.farrer.csu.edu.au/ASGAP>. Alternatively you can write to P.O. Box 357, Hawthorn Vic, 3122.

Gwen and Rodger Elliot are foremost among those passionately committed to promoting enthusiasm for and knowledge of Australia's indigenous plants. With David L. Jones, Rodger is writing the *Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants* and he was awarded the Gold Veitch Memorial Medal in 1999. Both he and Gwen are Honorary Life Members of the SGAP and their work in this area was recognised with an AM award last year. Gwen is involved in a popular radio programme in Melbourne and, together, the Elliots lead overseas tours for horticulturists.

A Patron of Australian Plants

David Morrice Gordon

By **Nina Crone**

David Morrice Gordon's work at Myall Park Botanic Garden epitomises the enthusiasm, the challenges and the triumphs of seed collectors, propagators, nurseryman and gardeners throughout Australia in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.



A remarkable dream, influenced by his father who had loved bush plants, sustained David Gordon through a tough early life spent taming a 'prickly pear block' on the western edge of the Darling Downs in Queensland. By the 1950s he had established a thriving sheep property and he was able to begin realising his vision of a garden featuring Australian native plants.

From Myall Park, 400km inland from Brisbane, he corresponded assiduously with fellow enthusiasts, sent seed-collectors across the length and breadth of the country, set up an impressive nursery and herbarium, and created a remarkable collection of Australian flora. To thousands of Australians the Gordon name is known through grevilleas – *Grevillea* 'Robyn Gordon', *G.* 'Sandra Gordon' and *G.* 'Merinda Gordon'.

Seed-collectors and nurserymen

In 1951 a cablegram from 'Gordon of Glenmorgan' brought the English horticulturist Len Miller to Myall Park. Len recorded his first days there:

Dave told me that he has amassed a total of a thousand plants so a start was made on planting same. For three solid weeks we planted, watered, collated. Each plant had to be recorded – name and where planted. If the plant subsequently died, this too had to be mentioned and if possible why it did so . . .¹

At weekends there were excursions into the countryside on collecting trips:

*Along the Surat Road was an area of *Eremophila maculata* – Dave had said that one particular plant there had pure yellow flowers . . . Well, we did find it and took many cuttings. These were sent to George Althofer at Nindethana Nursery at Dripstone in NSW. He propagated some and put them on the market. Hence *Eremophila maculata aurea* . . .²*

During 1952 and 1953 Len's plant hunting extended further afield: *Plants were loaded into the vehicle and away we went – first to Nindethana where we met Audrey and George Althofer . . . and he took me to Lake Burrendong. It was here that he envisaged an arboretum of native plants . . . we left there and continued . . . to Wail in Victoria where we met up with Alfreda and Alfred Gray. He ran the forestry nursery there. Again we unloaded plants for him. Whilst there we met with Alby and Henry Lindner, both keen collectors of Australian plants . . .³*

By 1954 Len was setting off for the other side of the continent: *. . . we travelled to Toowoomba, down the New England Highway to Coonabarabran, on to the Hume Highway and Albury . . . across to Ballarat, then Adelaide . . . Port Augusta, Ceduna, Eucla and Norseman, then to Coolgardie . . . and on to Perth . . . [where] I had to contact Mr Gardner, the Government Botanist. . . [who] saw my venture as a help to him.⁴*



Dave Gordon in Myall Park Botanic Garden Photo: Dorinda Schwennesen

Thereafter Len travelled north, to New Norcia, Moora, Minganew, Geraldton, the Murchison River and Northampton. Grevilleas stood out *Grevillea annulifera*, *G. leucopteris*, *G. excelsior*, *G. cristata* and *G. dielsiana* and another newly discovered plant *Grevillea candicans*. Then the collecting turned eastwards towards Mullewa where Len found *Grevillea bracteosa* and, on the sand plain country, *Banksia*, *Calytrix*, *Grevillea leucopteris*, *G. eriostachya*, *G. amplexans*, *G. dielsiana* and *Pileanthus peduncularis*. East of Merriden they collected *G. paradoxa*, *G. cryngioides*, *G. excelsior* and *G. yorkrakensis* before heading south to Bruce Rock and Narembeen.

At Bendering, a good flower area, Dave had asked Len to call on Bernie Lullfitz and after that it was off to Lake Grace where 'we came across a large area of *Grevillea insignis*, a striking shrub with blue-grey holly-shaped leaves and clusters of pink flowers.' Lake King, Ravensthorpe, the Esperance Road followed, then Corrigin and Quairading. Further north to York, Northam and the Wongan Hills where 'we saw *Grevillea armigera*, *G. shuttleworthiana* . . . Then it was Bunbury, Margaret River and Albany.

When Len arrived back at Glenmorgan on 4 May 1955, he had collected approximately 700 herbarium specimens and 500 seed species of which 61 were grevilleas. Miles covered -18,600.⁵

In 1954 Alf Gray succeeded Len Miller. Dave had met him at the Victorian Government Nursery at Wail where he had an unchallenged reputation for seed propagation of native species. Alf was not relishing the paperwork at Wail. As a champion of the conservation of native flora he yearned for fieldwork and he was drawn to gardening in the inland.

Alf worked at Myall Park from 1954 to 1957 the period when the nursery was built. Like Len, Alf was to travel on collecting trips,



Fascinating bark: *Acacia rhodophylla* Photo: Nina Crone



Early morning sunlight in Myall Park Photo: Nina Crone

setting off on his first venture on Boxing Day, 1955. He was away three months driving to WA across the Nullarbor Plain. On his trip the following year Alf found a striking unnamed grevillea north of Geraldton, a large handsome shrub, with long narrow divided leaves and yellow flowers growing in clusters. Specimens were sent to Charles Gardner who immediately named the plant *Grevillea gordoniana* in recognition of the scope and scale of Dave's work with native plants. Only two of these plants succeeded at Myall Park and although they grew to maturity they did not survive for long. So far efforts to obtain further specimens have failed.

The Gordon grevilleas

One of Dave Gordon's planting policies, a legacy of his father's teaching, was to plant trees of like variety closely together. 'I am a clumper. I plant in clumps rather than in a line.' There were aesthetic benefits, there were environmental benefits, but most importantly Dave was planting in this way to encourage natural hybridisation.

Records of collecting trips clearly emphasise a particular attention to grevilleas. In 1963 a promising hybrid appeared with the low growing habit of *Grevillea bipinnatifida*, combined with the brilliant flame-coloured flowers of *G. banksii*, and the supreme advantage of flowering all year round. It was the native plant that nurserymen all over the country had been waiting for. Dave gave it freely and proudly to nurseries in Brisbane and Sydney. He named it *Grevillea 'Robyn Gordon'*. In 1973 it was the first plant registered by the Australian Cultivar Registration Authority. In May 1984 the journal *Australian Horticulture* declared 'Market-wise it was a winner. The public readily gave it a place in their gardens. Landscapers looked upon it as a 'gift from above' and it was planted by the tens of thousands.' But Dave did not receive any money at all for this or the other Gordon hybrids.

There followed *Grevillea* 'Sandra Gordon', a cross between *Grevillea pteridifolia* and *G. sessilis*. It has long fine leaves, impressive golden yellow flowers and grows to 2-3m. The third registered Gordon grevillea is *G. 'Merinda Gordon'*, (originally named *G. 'Peter Gordon'*) a cross between *G. asteriscosa* and *G. insignis*.

Waterlilies

Waterlilies were also one of Dave Gordon's joys. As a boy of ten he saw his first native blue waterlily *Nymphaea gigantea*. Many years later he built and filled the Lake at Myall Park planting tubers collected from the Condamine district, but it was the rare pink lily that he had noticed growing in Undulla Creek in the 1930s, that he set his heart on. Botanical advice suggested that it should be isolated from the blue variety. However early attempts to cultivate it in Abergeldie Dam, near the Myall Park woolshed, were unsuccessful.

Then, in 1968 Charles and Robert Lethbridge gave Dave a single pink tuber from a waterhole on their property. It flowered in substantial quantities and was the progenitor of the pink waterlilies seen today in Chinaman's Creek on the Leichhardt Highway just east of Miles.

Inevitably waterlilies featured in Dave's contacts with experts. Evan Williams from NSW sent tubers of *Nymphaea immutabilis* and also of *N. gigantea* 'Albert de L'Estang', while Walter Pagels, the founding president of the Society of Water Lilies of the World, gave Dave the night-flowering *Nymphaea pubescens*. It was Pagels who described Dave Gordon's Australian waterlily collection as 'the best anywhere'. At Abergeldie, where *Nymphaea gigantea* (pink form) reigns supreme there are also the tiny *Nymphoides crenata*, *Monochoria cyanea* and the white *Ottelia ovalifolia* (Swamp Lily).

Correspondents and visitors

Dave Gordon was a prodigious letter-writer. His correspondence with George Althofer spread over nearly 60 years - from his first orders to the Nindethana Nursery in 1936 to a letter of condolence in 1992, on the occasion of Peter Althofer's death. Specimens, plant lists and accounts of collecting trips were exchanged, and there were many visits to Myall Park and Nindethana. There was much other correspondence with naturalists, conservationists, government departments and scientists throughout the world as well as in Australia. In the early 1950s on Althofer's recommendation Dave began



Pink waterlilies at Chinaman's Creek, on the Leichhardt Highway, near Miles, Queensland. Photo: Priscilla Mundell

writing to Albert de L'Estang, a French botanist living in the Gulf of Carpentaria region between Camooweel and Burketown. His is a heart-breaking story of endeavour against many natural disasters. De L'Estang's last letter to Dave is dated 6 November 1952. His garden called Adels Grove Botanic Gardens, and known locally as the Frenchman's Garden, can still be seen near Lawn Hill National Park.

As the Myall Park garden matured, the visitors increased. Edna Walling, Thistle Harris and Jean Galbraith made the journey. Dr Bob Johnson claims most of the staff at the Queensland Herbarium spent a weekend at Myall Park in October 1962, 'to view the incredible beauty of the wildflowers of arid Australia in one small garden on one weekend.' Then there were the specialist interest groups - Camera Clubs, Bird Watchers, Art Groups and the Society for Growing Australian Plants.

Among the foreign visitors was the Swiss naturalist, Dr Rene Bahler, but the greatest visit, and one full of excitement and drama, was that of Grenville Lucas, the Keeper of the Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. He arrived in April 1988 when the Condamine River was in flood and local creeks were impassable. Dave Gordon was not daunted, the local SES arranged transport across the Condamine and local detours solved the problem in the Glenmorgan area. Grenville Lucas was delighted, later speaking of the unique importance of this garden of specialised native Australian flora, and of the rare knowledge and expertise of its owner, Dave Gordon. He urged that no effort be spared to obtain government and private support to ensure the perpetuation of both.

We grow the blue type *N. gigantea* in the lake near the house, *N. gigantea* v. *rosea* in the Abergeldie water hole two miles out near the wool shed. This last is now extinct in its natural habitat, we do not grow any other varieties in Abergeldie and so we keep this beautiful pink flowered lily pure. We grow all varieties together in the

Extract from a letter dated 1992 from Dave Gordon, aged 93, to George Althofer. Courtesy Myall Park Botanic Garden Archives

Local indigenous plants and Erringibba National Park

A little south-east of Glenmorgan is 877ha of land which Dave Gordon gave to the Queensland Government in 1989. It is covered with a natural forest of brigalow (*Acacia harpophylla*), belah (*Casuarina cristata*) and napunyah (*Eucalyptus thozetiana*). This is Erringibba National Park, an area that has never been cleared or burnt and has only been lightly grazed. It is notable for its wild life such as forest birds, frogs and butterflies. This policy of retaining the indigenous local plant growth has also been extended to designated sections of Myall Park Botanic Garden.

A garden heritage in jeopardy

Passing years are threatening the fabric of the nursery. The pages of seed notebooks are becoming more fragile, the paint on the glass house and propagating tables is peeling, the seedling boxes are splitting - but much remains intact. In the seed room with its beautiful silky oak joinery, there are carefully made wooden index markers, solid boxes for transporting plant stock, bundles of fine wire for attaching hundreds of metal labels. Outside, watering cans, terracotta pots, sieves, and sturdy garden tools gather the red dust of the western plains. Together with the herbarium this collection is a significant horticultural heritage.

Dave Gordon died last year at the age of 102 years, but a treasure trove of material remains as witness to his vision. For the band of dedicated directors of Myall Park Botanic Garden, determined that a significant segment of Australia's botanical and horticultural history is not forgotten, the task of maintaining the 'living collection', nursery, and herbarium is formidable. At present few AGHS members have signed the visitor's book. The Myall Park Botanic Garden is deserving of the interest and support of the Australian Garden History Society.

Acknowledgments

The assistance of the Directors of Myall Park Botanic Garden Ltd, particularly that of Gill Kidd, Carol McCormack, Priscilla Mundell and Dorinda Schwennesen, is gratefully acknowledged, as is the interest of Merinda Warner (nee Gordon) and the help of Sandra and Jim Hughes. All those named gave generously of their time in personally helping me appreciate a remarkable garden.

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Metal labels used to identify seedling boxes.



Glasshouse and propagating tables.



Interior of glasshouse.



Remains of seedling boxes.

Above photos: Nina Crone

Items Of Interest

New light on an old topic

One of the benefits of the Garden History Research Forum run by the Sydney and Northern NSW Branch is the opportunity for members to present small items of research. At the December forum Richard Clough revealed previously unpublished research on Edna Walling's career as a garden writer. This included a description of articles she wrote for several journals at the same time. Some of the articles were written under her name, but Richard's analysis found that she also wrote under the nom-de-plume Barbary.

Horti Hall – in name only

Readers may remember the article, 'Just a Minute' (Vol. 13, No.2, September/October 2001, pp. 19-21) by Mary Ellis, that described the chequered history of Melbourne's Horticultural Hall. Its fate has been determined. The newly refurbished, historic hall is now being used by the City of Melbourne as a two-roomed exhibition space for artists. Known as Horti Hall the building also houses a large-scale rehearsal, performance and community space and is the new administrative home of the Next Wave Festival and the Victorian Folklife Association. Perhaps an occasional exhibition of botanical art or a photographic display of the state's gardens will remind visitors of the hall's earlier purpose.

Open days at Illawarra Grevillea Park

This 15ha garden is testament to the enthusiasm of Ray Brown for grevilleas and his desire for a specialist garden to display them. He marshalled the assistance of the Grevillea Study Group of the Australian Plants Society and the garden was established in 1993 at the rear of the Bulli Showground, 10km north of Wollongong. Of interest to grevillea aficionados are the

spectacular *Grevillea* 'Orange Marmalade', a hybrid selected by Ray Brown, the unusual *G. wickhamii* from north west Western Australia, and the park entrance gates commemorating grevillea expert Don McGillivray.

Heritage Rose Award

Congratulations to Noelene Drage (see *Australian Garden History* Vol. 13, No. 3 November/December 2001 pp. 12-15) who has received the Deane Ross Award for her work with heritage roses.

Thanks

The work of Beryl Black, Di Ellerton, Beverley and John Joyce, Helen Page, Ann Rayment, Kay and Mike Stokes and Georgina Whitehead in packing the last issue of the journal is greatly appreciated.

Artists and gardeners in Tasmania.

It is often suggested that plants are to gardeners what colours are to an artist. This year's AGHS annual conference in Hobart explores the strong connections between gardeners and artists. Are they one and the same?

Nationally recognised speakers will traverse a broad sweep of subjects: the botanical influences in work of John Glover, Marion Mahony Griffin, and Hardy Wilson, the inspiration Tasmania's endemic flora has provided to prominent landscape designers and to Australia's early arts and crafts movement. To offer a contemporary perspective a panel of practising artists, sculptors, painters and photographers will explain relationships between their art and their gardens.

Action



Archbishop Peter Watson and Helen Page at the launch of the Bishops court garden brochure in February 2002. Photo: Robin Page

Busy times at Bishops court in Melbourne

In February, the Archbishop of Melbourne, the Most Reverend Peter Watson, launched the 12-page brochure detailing the history of the garden at Bishops court. During 2002 the Victorian Branch of AGHS has arranged nine working bees in the garden and will also be responsible for a plant stall on 12 and 13 October when the garden will be open for the Australian Open

Garden Scheme. Readers interested in purchasing correspondence cards showing the Bishops court wisteria or the flowering cherry blossom may order them from Jackie Courmadias. Proceeds from the sale of these cards assists the maintenance of the garden at Bishops court.

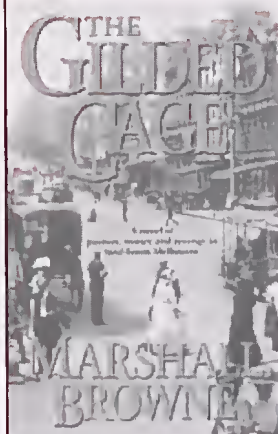
A conservation plan for Gracemere

The Queensland Branch has submitted a grant application to produce a conservation plan for Gracemere and it is now anxiously waiting to hear the result.

On-line

Website for Rica Erickson

All AGHS members can share something of the remarkable life of the speaker at a recent meeting of the Western Australian Branch. Nonagenarian, Rica Erickson, A.M., Hon. D.Litt. Cit. WA, FRWAHS, is a person of many parts talents – genealogist, naturalist, author and historian. Her life and achievements are described in a comprehensive website – www.liswa.wa.gov.au/erickson



THE GILDED CAGE

Marshall
Browne

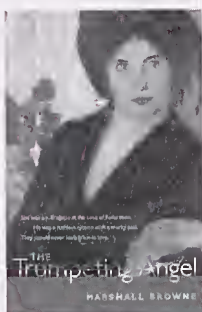
Marshall Browne's trilogy of historical novels set in 1880s and 1890s Melbourne culminated with the publication of *The Trumpeting Angel* last year. Now publishers Duffy & Snellgrove are proud to announce a new edition of *The Gilded Cage*, the first in the series.

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Diary Dates

MAY

May to end of June
Victoria, Melbourne, **The Banksias**
– **Watercolours by Celia Rosser** at
the State Library of Victoria.

4 Saturday
South Australia, Crafers, **Garden Visits** 1 p.m. at 'Eurilla' the home of Christopher and Jaquie Ganzis, 110 Mount Lofty Summit Road, Crafers and 3 p.m. at 'The Laurels', home of Frank and Pauline Hurren, 36 Piccadilly Road, Crafers. Contact: Miriam Hansman (08) 8333 0043.

7 Tuesday
South Australia, Rose Park, **Lecture: 'Gardens and Villas of the Italian Lakes'** by Tony Whitehill. 7.30 p.m. Gartrell Memorial Hall cnr Prescott Terrace and Alexandra Avenue, Rose Park. Contact: Miriam Hansman (08) 8333 0043.

11 Saturday and/or 25 Saturday
South Australia, Hahndorf, **Working Bee – The Cedars**, Heyesen Road, Hahndorf 10 am to 1 p.m. Contact: Allan Campbell (08) 8388 7277.

15 Wednesday
Victoria, Melbourne, **Working Bee – Bishops court**. Contact: Helen Page (03) 9397 2260.

19 Sunday
Sydney, Vaucluse House, **Up the Garden Path: The Centenary of Federation Contest**. Peter Watts, director of the Historic Houses Trust and AGHS National Chairman, will discuss the 150-year history of the Government House garden and the Trust's challenge to landscape architects to design an apt contemporary component. See the very different, highly creative approaches taken by five competitors. 10am – 12noon. \$15 for Vaucluse House Members, \$20 for others, includes light refreshments. Bookings essential on (02) 9518 6866.

Western Australia, Visit to Historic **Swan Valley** including Oakover. Contact: John Viska (08) 9328 1519 or Anne Willox (08) 9386 8716.

Queensland, Brisbane, **Walking Tour of Brisbane Suburbs: Fig Tree Pocket**. Contact: Elizabeth Teeland (07) 3378 8090 or Patty Bourke (07) 3286 2311.

25 Saturday
Victoria, Camperdown **Working Bee**
– **Purrumbete**. Contact: Pam Jellie (03) 9836 1881.

JUNE

6 Thursday
ACT, Monaro, Riverina Branch **World Environment Day Lecture**. Contact: Max Bourke (02) 6247 4630

9 Sunday
Sydney, Vaucluse House **Up the Garden Path: A Western View of Chinese Gardens**. Botanist and gardening authority, **Peter Valder**, has visited more than 200 gardens of all types throughout China. He considers how western visitors have perceived them over the years in an intriguing, illustrated talk. 10am-12noon. \$15 for Vaucluse House Members, \$20 for others includes light refreshments. Bookings essential on (02) 9518 6866.

20 Thursday
Victoria, Melbourne **Lecture – Paul Fox – Clearings: Six Colonial Gardeners and their Landscapes**. 6.30pm at State Library Theatre, Entry 3, La Trobe Street, Melbourne. \$12 for AGHS members, \$15 for non-members. Enquiries: Suzanne Hunt (03) 9827 8073.

27 Thursday
Sydney & Northern NSW - **Forum on Current Research**. 6.15 – 8.30pm in the Annie Wyatt Room, National Trust Centre, Observatory Hill. Admission: AGHS members \$8, others \$10. AGHS members share information on individual research projects through a 'show and tell' session. Refreshments will be served. For enquiries and expressions of interest, contact Colleen Morris (02) 9660 0573.

29 Saturday
Victoria, Beaufort **Working Bee – Belmont**. Contact: Helen Page (03) 9397 2260.

JULY

14 Sunday
Sydney, Vaucluse House **Up the Garden Path: An Affair for Colonial Camellia Lovers**. One hundred and seventy years ago to the day, W. Wentworth, Esq. received three ornamental camellia plants from Sydney Botanic Gardens. Professor Richard Clough discusses the species and the fate of their progeny in an illustrated history of the camellia in Australia, its breeding, the

personalities involved, the decline and then renewed interest in the genus in the 20th century. 10am – 12noon. \$15 for Vaucluse House Members, \$20 for others includes light refreshments. Bookings essential on (02) 9518 6866.

17 Wednesday
Victoria, Melbourne **Working Bee – Bishops court**. Contact: Helen Page (03) 9397 2260.

20 Saturday
Victoria, Melbourne **Working Bee – Bishops court**. Contact: Helen Page (03) 9397 2260.

27 Saturday
Victoria, Castlemaine **Working Bee – Tute's Cottage**. Contact: Helen Page (03) 9397 2260.

28 Sunday
Victoria, Castlemaine **Working Bee – Buda**. Contact: Helen Page (03) 9397 2260.

Western Australia **AGM – Speaker Carol Mansfield** will present an illustrated talk **'The Gardens of China'** at Heathcote ('Kitchen' building) – Contact: Edith Young (08) 9457 4956.

ADVANCE NOTICES

2002
Tuesday 8 August, Victorian Branch
– **AGM Speaker Richard Aitken**, assisted by Anya Petrivna, **'The Deflowering of Nature: A History of Artificial Flowers'**.

Saturday-Sunday 14-15 September
'Discovery Weekend' Self-drive tour of the Clunes area, led by Kevin Walsh. Interstate members welcome. Enquiries: Mary Chapman (03) 9326 1992 (work) or mchapman@alm.com.au and Libby Peck (03) 9867 8081 or epeckia@netlink.com.au

4-6 October in Hobart
AGHS – 23rd Annual National Conference
'Gardens of the Imagination'.

7-11 October
Post Conference Tour:
Tasmanian Gardens of the North & North-West.

2003
11-13 July in Brisbane
AGHS – 24th Annual National Conference
'Tropical Pleasures'.